

## IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

1. A method for detecting a de-myelinating disease or spongiform encephalopathy in mammals which comprises testing a biological sample obtained from the mammal for IgA antibodies which bind to an *Acinetobacter* antigen.
  2. A method according to claim 1, in which the *Acinetobacter* is one which presents to the mammal an antigen which exhibits molecular mimicry with the myelin of the mammal.
  3. A method according to claim 1, in which the antibodies are indicative of prior infection by *Acinetobacter calcoaceticus*.
  4. A method according to claim 1, in which the antibodies tested for are antibodies which bind to an epitope present in or derived from the *Acinetobacter* species or to a prepared peptide sequence corresponding thereto.
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5. **[AMENDED]** A method according to claim 1, in which the disease tested for is bovine spongiform encephalopathy.
  6. **[AMENDED]** A method according to claim 1, in which the disease tested for is multiple sclerosis in humans.
  7. **[AMENDED]** A method according to claim 1, in which the disease tested for is Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease in humans.
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8. A method according to claim 1, in which antibodies are assayed and a positive result is indicated by levels of antibodies at least about two standard deviations above that of control samples.

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9. **[AMENDED]** A test kit for use with a method according to claim 1, in which the test antigen is the whole *Acinetobacter* organism or at least one prepared peptide sequence corresponding to an *Acinetobacter* epitope, said test kit including a secondary antibody against the human, bovine, or other mammalian IgA.
10. **[AMENDED]** A method according to claim 1, in which the antibodies tested for are antibodies which bind to a peptide sequence that has sufficient conformational similarity to an *Acinetobacter* epitope such that the antibodies tested for are cross-reactive with the *Acinetobacter* epitope.
- B3 11. **[AMENDED]** A method according to claim 10, in which the epitope is the peptide sequence ISRFAWGEV (SEQ. ID. NO: 2).
12. **[AMENDED]** A method according to claim 10, in which the epitope contains the peptide sequence RFSAWGAE (SEQ. ID. NO: 1).
13. **[AMENDED]** A test kit for use with a method according to claim 10, in which the test antigen is a peptide sequence which is conformationally sufficiently similar to an *Acinetobacter* epitope to bind to antibodies that bind to the *Acinetobacter* epitope, said test kit including a secondary antibody against human, bovine, or other mammalian IgA.
14. **[AMENDED]** A test kit according to claim 13, comprising a peptide having the sequence RFSAWGAE (SEQ. ID. NO: 1) or ISRFAWGEV (SEQ. ID. NO: 2).

15. A test kit according to claim 9, in which the secondary antibody is a rabbit anti-human IgA or rabbit anti-bovine IgA.